

## **Introduction to the Georgia Performance Standards for American Sign Language**

### **Philosophy**

Language and communication are the essence of all that is human. Learning American Sign Language will provide students with the opportunities to communicate with another community, to develop an appreciation of the diversity of our society, and to develop a deeper understanding of their own language and culture.

### **Organization**

The Georgia Performance Standards for Modern Languages (GPS) are based on Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language). Since American Sign Language is a designated Modern Language, it follows the standards as outlined by the Modern Languages. The GPS are organized in outline form, integrating the national standards and the three modes of communication: interpersonal (IP), interpretive (INT), and presentational (P), as well as Cultural Perspectives, Practices and Products (CU) and Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (CCC).

The Georgia Performance Standards for American Sign Language specify the Standards and Elements that guide all instruction in every middle or high school modern language course. The GPS will continue to grow and improve over time. Thematic Units will provide Performance-Based Summative Student Assessments, as well as Interdisciplinary Instructional Tasks.

The standards are labeled as follows:

Standard: ASL1.IP1 ASL=American Sign Language 1= Level 1 IP=Interpersonal 1= first standard

The elements are specified beneath each standard.

The GPS for American Sign Language does not set an upper limit of what can be accomplished by the students; rather, they establish the minimum that students should be able to do by the end of each level.

### **Sequencing and Age Appropriateness**

The GPS for American Sign Language establishes what students will be able to do at designated benchmarks, Levels 1 through 4 throughout their middle and/or high school career. In order to enroll in a course, students must either have successfully completed the previous level of instruction or have demonstrated the required proficiency designated in the course description. Because students may begin formal language learning at various stages of development, content must be adjusted to reflect age appropriate interests.

## Georgia Performance Standards for American Sign Language

### Use of Target Language

The use of the target language as the principal means of communication in the classroom is essential from the very onset of instruction. Teachers must employ instructional strategies that allow and encourage students to practice using the target language. Central to this concept is a student-centered classroom with the teacher in the role of facilitator. The goal of language instruction is to have students use the target language for specific communicative purposes.

### Use of Textbooks, Resources, and Technology

The most common tool available to modern language teachers is the textbook; however, it should not dictate the curriculum. Teachers are strongly encouraged to use the ever-expanding resources available on the Internet and other media sources, as well. As set forth in the national standards, an important component of language classes is the use of the language beyond the classroom in the real world. The integration of technology is an important tool that can facilitate this goal by providing students the opportunity to interact with native speakers.

### Assessments

American Sign Language teachers should view assessment as an ongoing practice with both formative and summative opportunities as well as continuous measurement of performance growth. Assessment serves to direct instruction, and provide both student and parent feedback.

### Acknowledgment

The members of the 2002 revision team of the Georgia Performance Standards for Modern Languages are grateful to the writers of the Foreign Language Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools as set forth by the Commonwealth of Virginia for Levels 1 through 4, as well as their document entitled Framework for Instruction in American Sign Language in Virginia's Public Schools.